

HISTORY OF CARROLL COUNTY

SINCE 1871

by Bingham Duncan

(Continued from last week)

The period 1880 to 1910 may be treated as single unit in the history of Carroll County as the same characteristics are to be found in each of the three decades of that period. The growth of the population, both white and colored was steady and the population changed but slowly; the negro population increased in proportion to the total number of people five-tenths per cent from 1890 to 1900 and dropped two-tenths percent from 1900 and 1910. The increases in total population were simply in accordance with the growth of population throughout the state in the period mentioned. Carroll County continued on a strictly agricultural basis; manufactures have never become of sufficient importance to influence movement of people into the county. More and more land was cleared up and put in farms; the existing farms were divided into smaller ones and were operated in large measure by tenant farmers who had become an important part of the population by 1910. This period witnessed the building of two railroads through Carroll, the Georgia Pacific (now the Columbus & Greenville) in 1889, and the Yazoo & Mississippi Valley a decade later, the former cutting across the middle of the county and the latter touching the northwest corner. An important movement of this period was the rapid development of rural schools. After the actual start in 1870 the public school system was steadily improved during the eighties and nineties reaching a climax in 1895 when the only two remaining private schools in the county (the Carrollton Female College and the Male Academy) were merged to become shortly afterward a public school.

Another step of importance in the public school development was taken in the first decade of the present century when consolidated rural schools began to be considered and steps taken to establish them in various parts of the county.

The most important factor in the decline of population of Carroll that has taken place since 1910 developed during

the period from 1870 to about 1900, but the result did not show in the population changes until 1920. This factor was the depreciation of land value. The clearing of new farm lands of trees and underbrush permitted the soil to wash; this condition was particularly harmful in the lower areas and creek bottoms, which contained the richest farm lands in the county. Washing of these areas caused the caving and levelling of the creek banks. In 1860 Big Sand Creek had high banks and carried a sufficient volume of water to furnish power for the running of sawmills and grist mills; in the early eighties the creek was still only forty or fifty feet wide; by the end of the century, however, the old banks had been worn down and Big Sand was widening rapidly, being several hundred feet wide in some places. A similar description applies to the other creeks of the county. The overflowing of these creeks, and the consequent deposition of sand on farm land in the lower areas with the washing of the top soil from the land in the higher sections has caused a great depreciation of the agricultural value of land. Here, then, is a purely agricultural county having its only means of development and growth slowly diminishing and with no facilities or material for potential industrial development. This condition with the rise and growth of neighboring towns such as Greenwood, Winona, and Grenada, which are located only a few miles from Carroll County, has been the principal reason for the decrease in population of Carroll since 1910.

A contributing force in the population decline from 1910 to 1920 was the wholesale migration northward of negroes during and immediately after the World War; 1,123 negroes left the county during that decade. The further decrease in the colored population between 1920 and 1930 is to be attributed to the decline of the stagnant population rather than to movements out of the county.

The decrease in the number of white people of the county between 1910 and 1930 was 1,178. This decline has been the result of the agricultural condition outlined above. With the exception of a few business and professional men the college trained youth of the county has been unwilling to remain here because of the lack of economic and social benefits.

Thus the old population of Carroll County has been moving out to the surrounding towns and cities and there are no attractions there to provide for the inflow of a new group.

CONCLUSION

Close study of all the factors that have influenced, both for good and for bad, the development of Carroll County

since its reorganization in 1870 and 1871 indicates that the present condition of the county and the make-up of its population is a direct result of agricultural conditions within the county coupled with the industrial rise of the towns and cities adjacent to, but not located within that county. Contrary to the usual case this county suffered few if any ill effects from the freeing of the slaves and the reconstruction era. The principal effects of the reconstruction era were the beginnings of the breaking up of the larger plantations with the consequent multiplication of small farms and the establishment of a rural school system. The former effect has not in itself been detrimental to the county as a whole and the latter has been of material benefit in the reduction of illiteracy in Carroll.

APPENDIX

BIOGRAPHICAL

GREENWOOD LEFLORE

Greenwood Leflore was born June 3, 1800 at Le Fleur's bluff near the present site of Jackson, Mississippi. He was the son of Louis Leflore, a French trader and an Indian girl named Rebecca Cravat. In 1812 the family moved to a spot on the Natchez trail now known as French Camp. While Leflore was there a Major John Donly, a mail carrier between Natchez and Nashville, became interested in him. Donly persuaded Louis Leflore to allow him to take the son to Nashville to be educated. The father agreed and the boy went the same year, remaining in Nashville until he was eighteen years of age.

One of the many stories connected with Leflore is told of his marriage. Having been given his education by Major Donly it was natural that the boy should turn to him for advice. When he had completed his schooling Greenwood went to the major and asked him what he (Donly) would do if he loved a girl and her parents refused to consent to her marriage. Donly replied that he would steal the girl. Shortly after the conversation Greenwood eloped with Donly's daughter.

A few years after his return home Leflore became a citizen

of the United States; the following year, 1826, he was elected, with David Folsom, a chief of the Choctaw Nation, in 1830 he was made chief of the western district and later of the entire nation.

Leflore figured prominently in the signing of the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, in which the Choctaws ceded their remaining lands in Mississippi to the United States. He is credited with the prevention of the perpetration of many land frauds against the Indians, particularly those remaining in Mississippi under the provisions of the treaty. Leflore's willingness to go to great lengths for his people was illustrated by a special trip made during Andrew Jackson's presidency to Washington to secure the removal of an Indian commissioner whom he considered incompetent.

By the terms of the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, Leflore was granted a home site and several thousands of acres of land in Carroll County. (A total of 15,000 acres by the treaty and subsequent grants). He settled on this plantation and built a beautiful home where he remained until his death in 1865.

Besides his plantation, on which he had some four hundred slaves, Leflore founded for his plantation convenience a small town at the junction of the Yazoo and Tallahatchie Rivers, which he called Point Leflore; he established a steam sawmill, opened a road with bridges that cost him \$75,000, and owned his own steamer on the Yazoo River; he was also head of a syndicate owning large areas of land in Texas.

In 1835, Leflore was sent to the legislature of Mississippi as the first representative of Carroll County. From 1841-1844 he was made state senator from Carroll. Leflore strenuously opposed secession and in 1861 exerted all his influence against it. Throughout the period of the war he refused to recognize the change in government and would never accept Confederate money.

Leflore died August 21, 1865; he requested that he be shrouded in an American flag and his grandchildren held one over the casket as it was lowered. He was buried in the family lot near Melmaison. The monument marking the grave bears the inscription:

GREENWOOD LEFLORE

Born June 3, 1800 -- Died Aug. 21, 1865

Last Chief of the Choctaws

East of the Mississippi

(above article copied from THE CONSERVATIVE, Carrollton, Carroll County, Mississippi--Friday, October 20, 1933)